



Coaching older athletes

In general terms, changes occur physiologically in older athletes. There tends to be a reduction in the work capacity, heart-lung efficiency, endurance, power, strength, agility and coordination after 30 to 40 years of age.

When coaching older athletes it is important to:

- check with the athlete regarding any health or injury issues. A medical clearance may be advisable for some types of activities.
- include longer warm up and cool down periods
- provide alternatives to reduce intensity of activities
- include longer recovery periods between activities
- encourage feedback on the intensity of training
- encourage the individual. Fitness levels can still be improved, regardless of the current standard.
- be aware that endurance capacities slowly decrease between 25-65 years. Greater decreases occur after 65 years
- be aware that while strength decreases with age, it can be improved with training
- be aware that the reasons masters athletes participate may be different to their younger counterparts. Social reasons and health may be more important than performance outcomes to many masters athletes.

Further resources are available to assist coaches in planning training programs and understanding the needs of older athletes.